



ALAN LEBOVIDGE
CHAIRMAN

Springfield Finance Control Board
436 Dwight Street
Springfield, MA 01103
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

November 7, 2005

Dear Springfield Teachers:

Since last March, we have been working hard, most recently with the help of a state mediator, to settle the teachers' contract. In fact, we have had approximately 25 meetings covering hundreds of hours of negotiating. There has been much public comment and speculation regarding the terms of the comprehensive financial offer that the City currently has on the table to resolve this contract. A good deal of that public commentary has not been accurate. It is time for you to get a clear presentation of key features of the financial offer to the SEA.

Wages

The SEA estimates that had the wage freeze not been imposed, teachers' salaries would be \$6 million higher than current rates. We have proposed a first year ('05-'06) wage increase of \$13 million dollars. This represents an 11% wage increase for the bargaining unit in the first year of the contract. Our proposed wage increase is not a strict across-the-board adjustment. Rather, in implementing the wage proposal, all teachers are moved three steps and receive additional salary increases which make their positions competitive with surrounding communities.

For the second year of the contract, we have proposed a wage increase roughly totaling \$3.25 million or 2.5% of the first year payroll. We've also proposed an annual 2.5% increase to the teachers' payroll for each of the remaining five years of the contract. Accounting for the two years of the wage freeze (FY '04 and FY '05), this represents an average annual increase of 3.2% per year for the first three years of the agreement.

Advanced Degrees

All teachers who have earned Masters degrees, CAGS or Doctorates since the beginning of the wage freeze will be placed on the appropriate column during the first year of the contract. All teachers who are currently on the Masters column and being paid accordingly will be "grandfathered" at that level. Teachers applying for the Career Ladder positions (below) must have a recognized Masters degree by 2010-2011.

Teacher Career Ladders

We have also proposed an innovative teacher career ladder system. In addition to positions falling on the traditional salary grid, two new positions called Teacher Leader and Instructional Leadership Specialist have been proposed. These will be posted positions assigned to a different salary schedule. It is anticipated that 30% to 40% of teachers might apply for these new positions and teachers holding these positions will have some of the highest salaries in the region ranging from \$53,000 to \$70,000. There are different expectations for these new positions and a separate evaluation process will be negotiated. Teachers accepted into these positions must be willing to be assigned to schools that have not achieved AYP and are generally underperforming as well as to mentor their colleagues. Part of the criteria for being accepted and advancing into these positions will be a track-record of success in improving student achievement. This success rate will comprise 30% of the entry criteria. The remaining 70% will be based on actual classroom performance, the range and quality of instructional strategies used, and a portfolio of other professional contributions to school improvement and student improvement.

Teacher Leaders will be full-time teachers who will engage in curriculum development, leading and conducting professional development (including extended-day workshops), developing and supporting the School Improvement Plan, serving in various leadership roles which could include department chair, grade-level chair and head teacher.

Instructional Leadership Specialists (ILS) will spend 80% of their work time supporting and developing the instructional practices of teacher colleagues. They will be a defined part of the leadership team at each school that will design and write the School Improvement Plan, and related professional development plans. The ILS teachers will work with Teacher Leaders to assure effective induction, orientation and mentoring of first-year/early career teachers. ILS teachers will spend the other 20% of their work time instructing students, utilizing best practices confirmed by research and results.

Critical Shortage Areas

The school district will identify critical shortage areas on a three-year cycle, based on the availability of fully certified teachers in specific subject areas. Teachers certified in these areas will be offered a \$6,000 salary enhancement for the three-year period (\$2,000 per year). Teachers may decline the critical shortage designation and the salary enhancement. New teachers who accept the designation will have to reapply at the conclusion of the three-year period to remain employed by Springfield as Critical Shortage Teachers.

We understand that this process has been long and at times, difficult. The circumstances currently facing the City and its schools require hard choices, and we have been working in the negotiation process to shape an agreement acceptable to all. While providing you with a competitive salary is an important objective, it is one of many areas of vigorous discussion at the bargaining table. Other areas in which we believe that we are close to agreement include resolution of the wage freeze and health insurance issues, a new compensation system that recognizes the professional nature of teachers' work, a beginning teacher induction and mentoring program and new initiatives regarding teacher performance and accountability.

Quite apart from collective bargaining negotiations, the Finance Control Board has taken decisive action and committed significant resources to improving the quality of life for all those working and learning in the Springfield schools. We will continue to remain committed to improving such things as the physical facilities and the level and quality of supplies and books for students. We respect your professional dedication and commitment to the children of our school system. It is our goal to provide you with the tools necessary to advance our common mission of improving the quality of education in the Springfield Public Schools. Thank you for your professionalism and perseverance.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Puccia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Philip" and last name "Puccia" clearly distinguishable.

Philip Puccia
Executive Director